



SHIELD Mental Health Series: Session Two

Cultivating Regulation & Resilience Amid Ongoing Uncertainties & Inequities

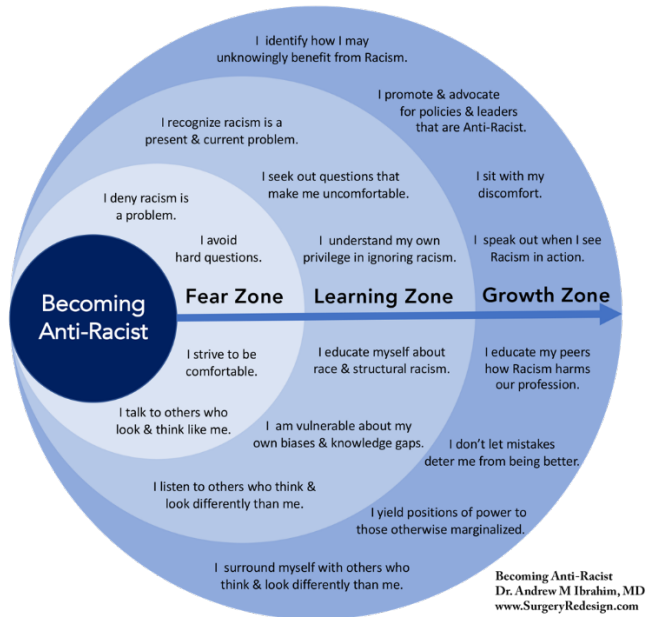
[End Part 3 – Begin Part 4]

Erin Sivak: Welcome to our final segment of this podcast. In this section, we will hear from Paul and Courtney about identifying steps you can take toward creating a more equitable experience for your students.

Courtney Tucker: So, one of the things that's important as we talk about equity, and we begin to talk about how are we going to work into achieving it, how we're going to address it is to recognize that it's going to require all of us, no matter where we are to come outside our comfort zone, and the thing that I told anyone is the next step right outside our comfort zone is fear, and that's where a lot of people go back. They'll be like, "Ooh, let me go back. I don't like being scared."

So, we stay in our comfort zone, because we get scared, but if we don't lean into the discomfort of the fear, we won't learn, and we won't grow. And so, as we continue, and you all begin embrace these topics of racial equity, of antiracism, and we begin to do all of that, we're going to ask everyone, "Lean into the discomfort, because that's how we got; we've got to lean into acknowledge it; don't hide, acknowledge it. Don't be afraid of it, because on the other side of that is our growth."

And what you'll see here is (image below). Dr. Kendi, he did this thing; he's like, "You know what? This comfort zone diagram is a thing. And he's like, "Look, we're all in the process, just like we're all in the process of growing. We're all in the process of becoming antiracist. And part of that means we have to shift through the same zones. If we want to be antiracist, we've got to shift through the same zones. We've got to get past our fear, and be like, "Ooh, I don't know about this. We've got to get to learning; we've got to sit with our discomfort, and we've got to be able to grow, and the growth looks different."



And so, for me, seeing this diagram just reminds me it's okay for me to feel a queasiness in my stomach. It's okay for me to feel a little anxious, but if I really want to get on this journey, and I really want to embrace and help all people feel comfortable in my presence, then I have to not allow the fear to dictate my behavior, because if it dictates my behavior, then I'm trying to be comfortable. If I don't let it dictate my behavior, I'm trying to grow.

It reminds me I used to work out with a personal trainer, and she'll be like, "Courtney, pick up the 30-pound weights." I'm like, "I can't pick that up." I wouldn't even try, "I'm going to the 20," because then when I tried, and she actually made me do it, I'm like, "Wait, my muscles are stronger, I've got this. I can lift the 30-pound weight," but I would never know if I kept letting my actions be driven by my fear.

And so, one of the things that this fear provokes, and one of the things that this fear talks about is the concept of white fragility. And it can be a barrier. And for me, it's a point where I'm like, "Stay and talk to me." And other people are like, "I'm out. I'm gone. I can't deal with this. This is making me uncomfortable. I've got to go."

And I'm like, "No. Even though it might be coming across as a little intense, even though you're getting all my emotions, I still want to have this conversation. Don't walk away from me." And so, what we're going to do is I'm going to have Paul talk a little bit about it, and then I'm going to come back to you.

Paul Hyry-Dermith: Great. Thanks, Courtney, and hi, everyone. I'm really, really feeling



happy, and appreciative to be with you all. Yeah. I was thinking, Courtney, when you were sharing that prior slide about kind of the comfort and fear, and learning in growth zones, and I was thinking just how hard it is for me, personally, to come out of the comfort and fear zones, and really own myself, and my responsibility in the learning space, and ultimately in the growth space, and how much growing I have to do.

And I feel like this concept of white fragility, I experience as a real gift to help me understand myself, and also, to help understand the thought patterns that I believe I see in many other white people, starting with me around some of this, and I think the first thing is just sometimes when I'm thinking about things, I want to think that racism is about people of color, but of course, racism really is about white people.

We created racism, and we benefit from it. And it's really, really hard, and uncomfortable for us to talk about it, and we are so good at getting out of the conversation. So, I feel like when I look at some of the examples on this slide, that whole notion of, "Well, if somebody starts a conversation, and then I think, well, they're pulling the race card."

So, that's my way of first emotionally, and then often conversationally just sort of like stepping away. So, I get offended by somebody else bringing up the topic of racism, or I get angry. And then, I think the second one I've been thinking so much about, the idea that when I do something that is racist that a person of color, another person experiences as having a racist impact, then immediately what I want to do is focus on my intentions.

So, I don't want to think, "Okay, I recognize that what I did had this impact on you. I want to say that's not what I meant." So, I think that that train of thought, and that is such a deeply ingrained train of thought in me, to immediately go to, "That's not what I meant." So, I think really being able to think, "How can I stay focused on my impact? Because really my intentions just aren't that important, quite frankly. We all have the best of intentions."

I'm sorry, Courtney, can we go back, just a couple of other things. So, just to say, then, I think another thing that I often do is I super-intellectualize this conversation. So, this thing about criticizing the process, so I might say to myself, "Oh, yeah, racism is important, and we need to acknowledge it, but I don't like the way this particular person is bringing this topic up, or they're not doing it the right way."

So, that's such a piece. I also think one fact has been an example that came up in our work recently, is one of our team members was saying that she was in a conversation with someone, and that person kind of explicitly, they were talking about a situation where a person of color had explicitly identified their experience of racism in the situation.



And then there was a white person in a position of power, who sort of said, “Well, yes, racism is important, and I recognize that there is systemic racism, but I’m not sure that’s what’s going on here.” And so, we are saying, “So, here a person of color has just named the impact on them,” and then it becomes, “Well, yes, racism is important, in general, but I’m not sure it’s happening in this situation.” So, it’s just a way of stepping away, and not really listening to what folks are saying.

And so, just to say, like, I feel like we’ve been taught these habits of mind that really, really let us just step away from the conversation, and so, it is so uncomfortable for me, often, to be in this conversation, but what I’m trying to do with humility is just to stay in the conversation, even when it’s uncomfortable. If I can just do that, I feel like that’s often the first step of moving from the fear zone to the learning and growth zone.

And Courtney, I don’t know if you want to talk about the next slide, or if you’d like me to? I’ll just say a little bit, and Courtney you may want to pick it up, but many of us have seen either a TED Talk, or an interview, maybe, or read some pieces from Robin DiAngelo’s work on white fragility, so this is a little bit more of the description kind of coming from there.

I really love that sentence in the middle of the first bullet, “For a lot of white people, just suggesting that being white has meaning, will trigger a deep defensive response.” In other words, I think for me I often want to say, “Well, I don’t see color,” or, “Race doesn’t matter.” So, the idea that, in fact, it is a meaningful reality that I am white can be really uncomfortable for me. It can be really uncomfortable, just for me to think about I am white, or think about my whiteness.

Those are things that can trigger me and make me defensive. But what that, then, allows me to do, again, is step away from the conversation, and I can. I can walk away from the conversation, and not really have to be touched by it. So, yeah. And then, the idea that it’s so interesting, so we’ve got all these different ways of kind of stepping away from the conversation, actually are there an assertion of power.

And we may not feel powerful, but that’s part of the trick about oppression that so often we don’t feel that we’re asserting power, but nevertheless, we’re asserting power, and other people can see it.

And then, finally, this final idea that I’m going to do everything I can, so that I’m not perceived as racist, or that I’m just very anxious not to be racist, so as opposed to saying, “Of course, I have to own I grew up in a society, and in a context that’s deeply racist.” Of course, it has



touched me deeply, and I need to unlearn racism, as opposed to just saying, “I’m not racist.” But again, it’s really hard to do that, and really important. So, Courtney, I don’t know if you have anything you’d like to add about it?

Courtney Tucker: I think one of the things, and you’ll see on this diagram is how that can shift from just being, “Now, we’ve seen the videos.” We can watch, and I could have pulled up many things to show us, like how it goes from just this fragility to actually a weapon, and it becomes a weapon. So, utilized against BIPOC individuals, marginalized individuals, where it becomes a policing, a shaming, a refusal to look at it, invalidation.

And so, what happens when it’s not just that the fragility happens, it’s that it begins to become something that is weaponized and used to further marginalize the people that we aren’t trying to marginalize in the first place. And so, one of the things that people always talk about is like, “You know what, the opposite of that, when you hear the word fragility, there’s working on being an ally, and going through this process of like, ‘You know what? How can I be an ally to you, instead of being someone that becomes weaponized against you?’”

And so, with that in mind, one of the things you’ll see on this diagram is this is once you do that, even allyship can kind of be performative. It says, “You know, an authentic ally doesn’t make it about them.” You don’t center you in the conversation. You make sure to center someone else. You make sure that you’re constantly educating yourself. You’re not doing it; it’s not a band wagon thing. It’s not a thing that, “Oh, I’m doing it today, and I’m not doing it tomorrow.”

It’s when you’re actually, like, “You know what? I’m willing to take risks, like I’m really willing to lean into it,” and this outrages me. I’m upset. I’m feeling the empathy, the grief, and literally, authentic allyship, anyway it’s like are we sitting with the discomfort? Can we hold? I tell everyone, “It’s really easy to hold people’s joy, and people’s happiness. It’s much harder to sit with their pain.”

Paul Hyry-Dermith: And their anger.

Courtney Tucker: And their anger. Yes. So, it’s really hard. And so, can we do that? Authenticity means I can hold all parts of you. And so, how are we allowing that to happen, be it how people speak, how it’s demonstrated. How am I saying, “I can hold all of you?”

As we’re closing, and we’re going to turn it back over, I just want you all to hold that this is just not a call to action. It’s a call to action to really think about how do we show up in the



world differently in a way that advocates for others, and also, in a way that builds resilience for others, because when we can do that, we'll make the world a better place for all of us to be in. Can you imagine regulated individuals coming into your office when you're not getting cussed out, and people are like, "You're not giving me enough attention. What do you mean? Duh, duh, duh."

You're like, "Whoa, where's this?" But people coming in regulated. Can you imagine people coming in, and being like, "I feel the world sees me? I feel the world loves me. I feel the world holds me." Can you imagine how health disparities would decrease? Can you imagine how the prevalence of hypertension, and heart disease in communities of color would decrease, if we could do those things?

So, I want to leave that with you all. The book is put in the chat ([We Want to Do More Than Survive by Bettina L. Love](#)), and I want to turn it back over, and I don't know, do I turn it back over to you, Karen, to end it, or who am I turning it over to? So, thank you all for having us today. I'm looking forward to continuing this journey with you.

Erin Sivak: Thank you for listening to this podcast series. Please go back to the site to take the posttest, and claim credit for the course.

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